When you walk briskly, play, skate, clean house, dance, or climb stairs, you are moving for health.

or centuries, civilizations have known and nurtured the simple fact that the secret of good health begins with systematic and good eating habits together with adequate exercise. Ancient science speaks to this logic, as does the increasing body of epidemiological data, all suggesting that dietary habits and moderate exercise can reduce the occurrence of heart attacks, strokes, type II diabetes and certain cancers.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that by 2020 noncommunicable diseases will cause over 70% of the global burden of disease.

Agita Mundo – Move for Health, the slogan for World Health Day 2002 (WHD 2002), is a call to individuals, communities and countries to associate action for health with the public health task of prevention. It sounds very simple and full of good common sense that cuts across economic, cultural, social and geographical barriers. And therein lies the challenge of translating the powerful combination of scientific wisdom and good sense into policy and research priorities that assist people to live longer and healthier lives.

oncommunicable diseases are those that people acquire over a period of time due to what they eat and how they live. Individual behaviour is only a part of the problem. Poverty, violence, rapid social and economic changes, lack of education, inadequate or total absence of health services, and a lack of clear policy direction contribute as much to the increase in cases of cancer, diabetes, or cardiovascular diseases, as they do to AIDS and malaria.

As countries struggle to cope with the doubleburden of cancers, cardiovascular diseases and strokes, in addition to AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, WHO proposes to lead a global health debate on the epidemiological shift in the global burden of disease and the factors that are fuelling this process of change. Physical activity, a key determinant of this shift, will be the area of focus for WHD 2002.

A major contributor to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity is the lack of physical activity. WHO estimates that lack of physical activity leads to more than two million deaths per year. A combination of improper diet, insufficient physical activity and tobacco use are estimated to be the cause of up to 80% of premature coronary heart disease. In countries as diverse as China, Finland and the USA, studies have shown that even relatively moderate changes in lifestyle are sufficient to prevent the development of almost 60% of type II diabetes cases. It is likely that onethird of cancers can be prevented by maintaining a healthy diet, normal weight and physical activity throughout one's life. Inactivity substantially increases the risk of high blood pressure, lipid disorders, osteoporosis, depression and anxiety.

In the United States, obesity causes 300 000 deaths annually, a number exceeded only by deaths related to tobacco. A higher rate of obesity is found in many countries of Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. Some island nations of the Western Pacific have especially high rates of obesity. In China, an estimated 200 million people could become obese in the next ten years.

"Obesity cannot be prevented or managed, nor physical activity promoted, solely at the level of the individual governments. The food industry, international agencies, the media, communities and individuals all need to work together to modify the environment so that it is less conducive to

Eating well-balanced meals in a world where people are severely under-nourished is an issue that needs to be addressed by the public health community. While lack of food is a major issue in some segments of society, data show that caloric excess, physical inactivity, obesity and the chronic diseases that they spawn are equally dangerous.

weight gain," says WHO.

Physical activity can be a practical means to achieving numerous health gains, either directly or indirectly. It can lower rates of violence among young people, promote tobacco-free lifestyles and decrease other risky behaviours, such as unsafe sex or illicit drug use. It can also reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness among the oler persons and improve their physical and mental agility.

Ceeking to prevent what is apparently invisible but very likely to occur over a period of time is a major part of the challenge of noncommunicable diseases. The issue of prevention needs to be addressed by policy-makers because of its costeffectiveness in saving lives. To date, that has not happened. Despite the fact that prevention was the major contributor to health gains in the past century with only five percent of the century's 30 added years of life expectancy attributable to advances in clinical medicine, most studies of health expenditures indicate that less than five percent of resources are devoted to prevention.

Since the results of prevention are separated in time from intervention, preventive activities are seldom a priority for policy-makers. DecisionMore than two million deaths each year are attributable to physical inactivity.

making for prevention often lies outside medical care and in the political arena. It is important that advocacy move beyond individuals to reach policy-makers as well. Thus, excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol, the passage of clean indoor air regulation, creation of recreational facilities, and planning for safe streets to name a few, are actions entirely dependent on advocacy for policy change.

Physical inactivity is not merely about individual behaviour. Crowding, crime, traffic, poor air quality, a lack of parks, sports and recreational facilities and sidewalks make physical activity a difficult choice for many people. The challenge of prevention is therefore as much the responsibility of governments as it is for people.

WHD 2002 is one such advocacy platform for policy change at the highest level. The campaign will give particular visibility to ways in which individuals and communities can influence their own health and well-being. It will also point the way for policy-makers and health practitioners towards investing in prevention, and not only cure, as the future of public health.

Any amount of physical activity will make you feel better. The minimum amount of physical activity required for the prevention of disease is about 30 minutes of moderate activity, every day.

TYPE AND AMOUNT OF ACTIVITY

active living

light to moderate activity ten minutes or more, a few times a day

daily

activity for health

moderate activity 30 minutes

exercise for fitness

moderate to vigorous activity twenty minutes

or more three times a week

training for sports

strenuous activity

duration and frequency according to individual fitness level



















Why is physical activity so important for my health?

Regular moderate physical activity is one of the easiest ways to improve and maintain your health. It has the potential to prevent and control certain diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis. Being physically active increases your energy level, helps to reduce stress and lowers unhealthy levels of cholesterol and blood pressure. It also lowers your risk of some cancers, especially colon cancer.

Regular active play promotes healthy growth and development in children and young people. It increases confidence, self-esteem and feelings of achievement, older adults benefit from both lifelong habits or newly learned routines of physical activity. It is important for healthy ageing, improving and maintaining quality of life and independence. Daily physical activity helps people with disabilities by improving mobility and increasing energy levels. It can also prevent or reduce certain disabilities.

What do you mean by "physical activity"?

Physical activity is any body movement that results in an expenditure of energy (burning calories). Simply put, moving! When you walk briskly, play, skate, clean house, dance, or climb stairs, you are moving for health.

How much physical activity do I need in order to improve and maintain my health?

Any amount of physical activity will make you feel better. The minimum amount of physical activity required for the prevention of disease is about 30 minutes of moderate activity, every day.

For those who count calories, this translates into about 150 calories per day. However, you can move for health without calculating calories. The formula is simple: at least half an hour of moderate physical activity over the course of each day.

This can mean getting off the bus two stops early on the way to work, for a 20 minute walk and then one stop early on the way home for another 10 minutes of walking. Ten minutes of cleaning house twice a day plus 10 minutes of cycling. A 30 minute basketball game or a dance with your brothers, sisters, friends, or children.

If you're new to physical activity, you can start with a few minutes of activity a day and gradually increase your pace, working your way up to 30 minutes. Remember that half an hour is only the minimum recommendation. Of course, the more time you spend moving for health, the more you gain.

The most important thing is to move!

Is sedentarism really a global public health problem? Aren't there more important health priorities, especially in poor countries?

The lack of physical activity is a major underlying cause of death, disease, and disability. Preliminary data from a WHO study on risk factors suggest that inactivity, or sedentarism, is one of the 10 leading global causes of death and disability. More than two million deaths each year are attributable to physical inactivity. In countries around the world between 60% and 85% of adults are simply not active enough to benefit their health.

Sedentary lifestyles increase all causes of mortality, double the risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity, and substantially increase the risks of colon cancer, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, depression and anxiety.

In the rapidly growing cities of the developing world, crowding, poverty, crime, traffic, poor air quality, a lack of parks, sidewalks, sports and recreation facilities and other safe areas make physical activity a difficult choice.

For example, in São Paulo, Brazil, 70% of the population is inactive. Even in rural areas of developing countries sedentary pastimes such as watching television are increasingly popular. In addition to other lifestyle changes, the consequences are growing levels of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Low- and middle-income countries suffer the greatest impact from these and other noncommunicable diseases – 77 % of the total number of deaths caused by noncommunicable diseases occur in developing countries. These diseases are on the rise. They will have an increasingly severe effect on health care systems, resources, and economies in countries around the world. Many countries that are already struggling to manage the impact of infectious diseases and other development challenges will be forced to spend their meagre resources dealing with noncommunicable diseases.

What can be done?

Most noncommunicable diseases are preventable. Individual and government action can save lives and livelihoods. Getting physically active is an important step in moving for health. However, physical inactivity is not merely the result of an individual's lifestyle choices. The lack of access to safe open spaces, sports facilities and school playgrounds can make moving difficult, if not sometimes impossible. Moreover, people's behaviour is influenced by insufficient knowledge about physical activity and its benefits. With insufficient budgets to promote physical activity, governments often fail to educate the public about the risks of sedentarism.

Government policies and programmes can have a great impact on people's ability to influence their own health. In order to promote physical activity, a community should prioritize and develop parks and open spaces, clean air and water, safe and attractive streets and a vibrant public life. This requires

the commitment, action and cooperation of health sector as well as other sectors: transport, environment, urban planning and law enforcement.

Many cities and towns have demonstrated that more opportunities to move for health can be created. Riverside avenues in Paris, France, are closed to cars during the summer for walkers, skaters, and bikers. In Bogota, Colombia, a city ordinance allows for the city's main avenue to be closed to automobile traffic every Sunday. The local Red Cross organizes free bicycles loaned to the public throughout the summer in Geneva, Switzerland.

What can I do?

It's easy, free, fun and virtually anyone can do it...

Brisk walking, biking and dancing are only some ways to be physically active. You can get moving at school, home or work. Take the stairs instead of the elevator (at least for going down!). Do simple stretching exercises while seated at your desk, standing at your post, or talking on the phone. Walk, run or bike to places where you might have taken a car or a bus otherwise.

Many of the activities you can do at home are very useful: wash the windows, paint the walls, vacuum or sweep, rake the yard or cut the grass, walk the dog. You can even do physical activity while watching television: rope skipping, stepping, riding a stationary bicycle, or sit-ups. Or just dance!

Your goal is to be active for at least 30 minutes over the course of every day.

Look for information and advice in your neighbourhood, community centres, hospitals or healthcare centres, gyms or sports centres.



World Health Organization

Department of Noncommunicable Disease Prevention & Health Promotion Avenue Appia 20, CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland Tel. +4122 791 21 11, Fax: +41 22 791 41 86 http://www.who.int/world-health-day whd@who.int agita mundo

agita mundo move for health











